United Nations A/72/PV.5

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

5th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Laaksonen (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Keita (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of Mali, allow me to extend warm congratulations to the President on his election to guide the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also commend the outstanding work of his predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson. I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Organization, my dear friend António Guterres, for his leadership, vision and commitment to the common values, purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Mali welcomes the choice of the theme of the present session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — which is both timely and relevant in a world that is confronted with the various challenges to peace, security and the considerable efforts needed to improve the living conditions of our populations. The highest priority of our joint efforts at present is not the effective preservation of our planet, which is of course in our best interests, but, more urgently, the interest of our future generations.

Given those numerous challenges, from which no one — not even my country, Mali — has been spared, since assuming my post as head of State, I have consistently devoted myself to working to quickly bringing peace and security for my people to an acceptable level, in creating genuine conditions for a decent life for the benefit of the Malian people and in improving our living environment. Since my election in 2013, I have firmly dedicated myself to the search for a negotiated political solution to the internal dimension of the Malian crisis.

After eight long months of intense and steadfast negotiations in Algiers — and, once again, I would like to say how much we appreciate the efforts of our Algerian brothers, especially those of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and we thank them for the welcome and the hospitality we received in that wonderful white city — the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was concluded. Today Mali is pleased with the conditions that were thus created for its future. The principal merit of the Agreement would have certainly been to immediately restore confidence among the Malian parties — no more belligerence.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

With the implementation of the Agreement, the general situation of the country has significantly improved.

I shall spare the Assembly the long list of the measures and concrete actions taken by the Government of Mali to implement the Agreement in strict accordance with the letter and the spirit of the commitments we have made. As an example, I would simply point out that, as of today, what we call in Mali the interim authorities and transitional colleges — two key elements of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation — are operational in the five regions of northern Mali.

In the same vein, I am particularly pleased with the current efforts aimed at the definitive return of the Malian administration to Kidal. That fortunate prospect was made possible by the efforts of the Malians themselves, aided by international mediation and the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). At the same time, the Government, under my authority, is working to stabilize the security situation in the central regions of the country, which today are a source of great concern for us and the whole country. That particular situation has become acute and urgent after the Algiers talks, which is to say that there is a new front to be secured and pacified. Important measures have therefore been taken and are currently under way, with very encouraging results.

Those results undoubtedly speak of the common will of Malian men and women to achieve peace, reconciliation and the re-establishment of genuine conditions for a good life together. We also owe those results to the multifaceted support of the men and women of the United Nations system in Mali. They have paid a high price to help us, otherwise maintaining peace would have been bloody. That is why I would like to commend the excellent work of the civilian and military staff of MINUSMA, who work under conditions that I know are difficult and often dangerous. From this rostrum, I would like to pay tribute to the memory of all of the victims, both civilian and military, Malian and foreign, who have fallen in the field of honour in Mali.

There have been numerous obstacles to the implementation of the Agreement, which have resulted in long delays, procrastination and postponements — all of which have generated immense impatience in national opinion and among international community.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Security Council for the adoption of resolution 2364 (2017), which renewed the mandate of MINUSMA. In addition, I am particularly pleased by the adoption, on 5 September, of resolution 2374 (2017), which establishes the legal framework for a sanctions regime against perpetrators of acts impeding the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Those two resolutions are aimed at the effective resolution of the types of difficulties underlying the implementation of the Agreement. They also reflect the steadfast determination of my Government to tirelessly continue in its political and institutional efforts for firmness and diligence in the processes related to the effectiveness of the Agreement.

The deterioration of the security situation in Mali has had a negative impact on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. Insecurity in Mali and the Sahel is a source of great concern for my country and for our neighbours. The situation poses, in all respects, a real threat to international peace and security. It is marked by terrorism, violent extremism and other forms of organized transnational crime, including trafficking in drugs, weapons and people.

The Sahel is swarming with organized-crime groups. They have access to substantial material, financial and logistical resources and pose serious challenges to the individual functioning institutions and organizations of all our States. They sow death through their criminal and asymmetrical attacks. Working to conquer areas only partially under our sovereignty, they find themselves free to maintain and spread their criminal activities, thereby seriously threatening the foundations, and even the very existence, of our States.

No single country by itself would be able to confront those cross-border threats. That was the entire rationale behind the establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) by Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad so as to confront together shared challenges related to the security and the development of our countries. From its founding, in February 2014, to the present, our organization — which I have the privilege of chairing in 2017 and 2018 — has made tremendous progress. In particular, it has put in place the force conjointe du G-5 Sahel to combat terrorism, transnational organized crime and the trafficking of migrants.

Although the adoption of Security Council resolution 2359 (2017) was certainly an important step, we would have preferred it to have been adopted under

Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which would have ensured its predictable and sustainable funding, including through the United Nations, in accordance with the decision by the African Union Peace and Security Council of 13 April.

The force represents the collective resolve of our States to work together to secure and develop the region that we share, with the support of our partners — whom I commend here for their constant support at our side. Today we are working tirelessly towards the effective operationalization and functioning of the force, with the very much appreciated support of friendly countries and partner organizations.

The first operations of the force will, we hope, begin in October. I can assure the Assembly that those operations will be carried out in strict compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law. A civilian mechanism will be deployed within the force so as to monitor that issue, which is so important to us, because the success of the force depends on the full and continued support of our people.

I would nevertheless like to draw the Assembly's attention to some of the challenges that characterize the operationalization and maintenance of the force. Among them, mobilizing comprehensive funding for the force figures prominently. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to invite all friendly countries and international partner organizations to the international contribution planning conference for the force to be held in Brussels in December. I would like to give my assurance that resources allocated to the force will be managed with total transparency. Moreover, we remain open to any support from our partners that can help ensure better management of the resources of the force conjointe.

I would also like to add, for the benefit of the friendly countries and international organizations that are ready to help us, that the Joint Force is in the public interest of all. Although we are going through a transitional phase today, the battle that we are waging in the Sahel is akin to a dam. If that dam were to give, that would be a misfortune for the civilized world, which shares our values. Therefore, in areas that involve equipping battalions and reinforcing logistics resources, as well as communications, emergency medical evacuation and combating the use of improvised explosive devices, we need the world's help.

Alongside security issues, the G-5 Sahel places high priority on issues involving development, the resilience of populations, governance and decent jobs for the youth of our countries, among others. I would like to call on members of the General Assembly and the international community to provide sustained support to the G-5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme.

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals remains a priority for Mali. In that context, in 2016, the Government adopted its strategic framework for economic recovery and sustainable development for the period from 2016 to 2018. Its overall goal is to promote inclusive and sustainable development, with the aim of reducing poverty and inequalities in a united and peaceful Mali, while building on the potential and capacity for resilience, with a view to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The macroeconomic framework of our country has improved, and numerous indicators show encouraging developments, including robust economic growth with an annual average of approximately 6 per cent, and a substantial improvement in the business environment. This was noted by the Arab Maghreb Union. In that context, Mali will hold the Invest in Mali Forum on 7 and 8 December in Bamako, and we invite friendly countries and international organizations to come and bet on Mali.

As a Sahelian country with an agro-sylvo-pastoral system, Mali remains deeply concerned about climate change, which is one of the major challenges involving the survival and development of humankind. That is why I would like to reiterate Mali's commitment to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to which it is party. In that regard, the international community must remain committed to its implementation so as to preserve the ecosystem for present and future generations.

The world continues to face numerous public health challenges, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and Ebola. While commending the progress made in the fight against those pandemics, we must strengthen international efforts so as to achieve the shared goal of eradicating those diseases. We must redouble our vigilance and efforts so as to implement, in particular, the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, which we, the world's leaders, adopted in New York in June 2016.

Concerning migration issues, Mali fully supports the ongoing process in the Organization aimed at the adoption in 2018 of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Together we must seek suitable solutions to the human tragedy taking place in the Mediterranean and the desert, which leaves no human conscience indifferent and leads to thousands of deaths, including those of women and children. That maritime cemetery represents a scandal for the twenty-first century, and it must stop.

Mali is at one and the same time a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. We therefore have established a national migration policy with a view to better overseeing the phenomenon. Mali has also established national mechanisms for better managing migration issues.

I take this opportunity to commend the substantial contribution of the Malian diaspora to the economic, scientific, cultural and social development of Mali. The diaspora constitutes both our pride and our wealth.

The Government and the people of Mali continue to pay close attention to the situation in Africa and the rest of the world. We are therefore concerned about the situation in Libya, which continues to have a negative impact on the Sahel region. We call on all Libyan stakeholders to encourage the search for peaceful solutions with a view to achieving a lasting settlement of the crisis.

Mali pays equal attention to the ongoing situation in the Middle East, in particular as concerns the impasse in negotiations surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mali reaffirms its support for the brotherly Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to regain their inalienable rights and calls for the resumption of negotiations aimed at a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security in a calm Middle East.

Similarly, we are concerned about the unprecedented increase in terrorism, violent extremism and religious intolerance in the world. To contain those global threats, which spare no country, we need to strengthen international and regional cooperation, foster a fruitful, ongoing dialogue and combat the vulnerabilities that expose our communities to extremist ideology. Mali welcomes the successes around the world in the fight against terrorist organizations and urgently calls for more cooperation and coordination in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

The realities and demands of today's world require that we adapt global governance to current challenges. The revitalization of the General Assembly and the long-awaited reform of the Security Council are becoming increasingly necessary if we are to have a United Nations capable of responding effectively to the legitimate expectations of all nations. That has been said here today.

Mali reaffirms its commitment to the African Common Position on the reform of the Security Council. Moreover, we express our concern about the current tendency to reduce the budget of peacekeeping operations at the very time when such operations have become crucial and substantial in terms of volume.

I wish to reiterate the Government of Mali's call for the necessary adaptation of peacekeeping operations to the dizzying developments surrounding them: global threats. We believe that the call we just launched for support for our common regional organization, the G-5 Sahel, must be promoted so that we may receive energetic support for the G-5 Sahel and establish the effective business and financing that we lack. Unfortunately, very often such promises remain mere pronouncements, at the very time such operations are indispensable and urgent for the well-being of the populations under permanent threat from diverse groups infesting the region.

Let me also say that today that our region is concerned about the trend in United Nations budgetary cutbacks. Each of us has been somewhat reassured today by strong statements made.

We have a collective responsibility to bring about peace and to ensure security worldwide. We have the collective responsibility to leave no one behind and to create the conditions for inclusive development for our populations. We have the collective responsibility to save and to preserve our environment and our common planet. Through my voice, Mali fully commits to play its role in this collective endeavour to build a better world for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mali for the statement just made.

Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Prince Albert (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by telling the President how pleased I am to see him conducting the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We wish him success in the accomplishment of this important and delicate task in the service of the international community. I have an excellent memory of my official visit to Slovakia last May. On that occasion I was able to appreciate his work and to consolidate the good relations between our two States.

"Peace must be our goal and guide". But "without a healthy environment we cannot end poverty and build prosperity". Those are the words of the Secretary-General, and current circumstances give those words special resonance. It is clear that the threat of nuclear escalation in Asia has never been greater, and that notion can leave no leader indifferent.

In accordance with its obligations, Monaco complies with the Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter. Respecting the commitments that apply to each Member State is paramount. We therefore refuse to be powerless witnesses of the indefensible stances that pose a grave danger to all our States. We condemn the irresponsibility of those who expose humankind to an irreversible disaster.

Recognizing the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, Monaco continues to support collective efforts for the promotion of peace and security. As a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, Monaco participates actively in the work of those regional institutions. In that connection, the Principality pays particular attention to the work of the Special Monitoring Mission on the crisis in Ukraine and its vicinity.

The Principality of Monaco, with 140 nationalities in its territory, has always been open to dialogue. Our country has been enriched by that diversity, which continues today. We are convinced that our common values — the defence of human rights, of democracy and of the rule of law — are among the ongoing priorities of a modern State concerned with the welfare of its citizens and those who live on its soil. The ideals that unite us allow us to move forward together, as our goals remain unfulfilled.

The fight against impunity is part and parcel of those ideals. Refusing to allow atrocity to dictate the law is a sine qua non condition of assumed sovereignty. The Principality of Monaco is fully committed to respect for justice and peace. That underpins our support for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on the most serious crimes committed in Syria. To the best of its ability, Monaco will continue its contribution in terms of the assistance to that country's long-suffering civilian population in order to enable them to rebuild and imagine a better future.

The situation in Africa, where over 20 million individuals are risk of losing their lives as a result of famine, will have serious consequences. Although drought is an exacerbating factor, it must be recognized that the primary cause for this humanitarian disaster is war. In keeping with our traditions, Monaco expresses solidarity by responding to the call of the United Nations for contributions to the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as to Monegasque non-governmental organizations.

Above and beyond those urgent humanitarian actions, Monaco's cooperation system implements a policy promoting the eradication of poverty and fostering sustainable development to serve the most vulnerable. My country's new strategic plan for official development assistance will work with public and private partners to respond to the most pressing needs — food security, health, education and job placement — beyond the mere duty to assist.

Good governance, the fight against corruption, and sufficient public resources are not empty words, but rather assets without which no State can meet the basic needs of its population or establish its development policies in a long-lasting manner.

Those crises serve only to further justify the Secretary-General's advocacy for "protection and

respect for human rights and for the creation of decent work opportunities for young people".

Today, by depositing our instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, I once again wish to associate my country with the efforts of the international community to promote their fundamental freedom and dignity. As Dag Hammarskjöld so aptly observed,

(*spoke in English*)

> "The United Nations was not created to lead mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell."

(*spoke in French*)

Attacks on innocent civilians affect us all, wherever they are perpetrated. We hope that the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism can bring us together in our determination to annihilate this barbarism.

Climate change is putting humankind in imminent danger. The unprecedented violence of recent extreme weather events serve to prompt us once again to recognize our limitations. Faced with nature unleashed, people will always lose. Hurricanes and typhoons have tragic consequences whether they form in the Atlantic or the North Pacific. The Paris Climate Change Agreement has garnered 195 signatures and 159 States parties. That is the clearest proof of the urgency felt at the global level. Only by promoting global awareness and mobilizing all sectors of our societies can we adapt our economies successfully. Several States, including Monaco, as well as some private companies, have already announced major measures aimed at changing our modes of transport, production and consumption. In general, a change in our lifestyles is more than necessary; it is crucial. The joint UNICEF-World Health Organization report of 12 July on access to water and sanitation reveals glaring inequalities that continue to worsen. Too many people are still marginalized or living in unacceptable conditions.

We must also resolutely persevere in the fight against all forms of serious violence against human dignity. In particular, we must work to improve the status of women as long as the discrimination and violence of which they are victims continues. Monaco welcomes the courageous initiative of the Secretary-General in that regard and yesterday signed the Voluntary Compact between the United Nations and Member States with a view to eliminating exploitation and sexual abuse in peace operations, humanitarian assistance, the promotion and protection of human rights and, more broadly, in the Organization's contribution to sustainable development. That commitment is a strong message that zero tolerance should become the norm for all States.

I believe it is important today to reflect on the creation of the United Nations, if only to appreciate it more. This exercise in remembering can enable us to put our current difficulties into perspective and convince us — if we needed to be convinced — of the importance of this global Organization. That brings me to express my satisfaction with respect to the vision that the Secretary-General has put forward so that the Organization will be better able to assist its Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We support him in his reform initiatives because we want a modern and efficient Organization where international civil servants, both at Headquarters and in its many fields of operation, are invested in a priority mission for which their work and self-sacrifice are recognized. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to all those who undertake to fulfil this mission on the ground, sometimes, as we have sadly seen too often this year, by putting their lives at risk. It is up to us, the leaders gathered in this forum, to forge an ambitious consensus and provide realistic mandates and sufficient resources to the Organization.

The first voluntary report from Monaco on its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was presented at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July. Monaco, like every State here today, can now deal with ensuring the effectiveness of its choices with respect to the global goals that we adopted here two years ago. I would like to mention the Assembly's call to action on 9 June with its adoption of resolution 71/312, which recognized that the ocean is our future. The implementation of SDG 14 on marine life, has special significance, and the success of the Ocean Conference, which focused on it, showed us that the conservation and sustainable development of the oceans and seas and their resources are essential for our survival.

We are fully and forever committed to our planet in general and to the oceans in particular. I firmly believe that our ability to save the ocean from gradual decline will help us save the planet. That is why I welcome the Secretary-General's visionary decision to appoint a Special Envoy for the Ocean, which highlights the

challenges to be met and is greatly needed if we are to streamline our actions. There can be no doubt as to the dedication and unwavering commitment of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, Mr. Peter Thomson, whom we warmly congratulate both on the work he has accomplished in recent months and on his new responsibilities. We have great hopes for his ability to bring together the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and academia to ensure that the targets of SDG 14 are met. It is therefore with great pride that the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco and the Prince Albert I Foundation will host him at the Maison des Océans in Paris. In doing so, the Principality is continuing a tradition established by my great-great-grandfather — a prince, oceanographer and passionate scientist — one of whose ambitions was to make science accessible to all and to use new knowledge to improve the well-being of humankind.

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of presenting, on the sidelines of the SDG 14 Conference, the Monaco Explorations initiative. The vessel *Yersin*'s three-year voyage around the world aims to increase our knowledge through marine biological research in association with local scientists, disseminate the results of our research and promote collective and concerted action in areas such as the creation of protected marine zones, while stimulating innovation.

I would like to conclude by affirming my confidence in science, which enables us to base our decisions on proven and verifiable facts. Whether it reassures us or frightens us, science must spur us to action and thereby to moving forward together towards progress and the hope for a better world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duda (*spoke in Polish; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would first like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, on his election to this honourable post. I would also like to assure him of Poland's full support for the tasks ahead of him and to say how pleased we are at his election, since he represents a country that is a friend and neighbour to my own. Once again, I offer him my warmest congratulations. I would also like to express my thanks to Mr. Peter Thomson for his active presidency during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

Like the pillars of the United Nations system, the international community's basic goals are the promotion of sustainable development, the maintenance of peace and security and the protection of human rights. I was therefore very pleased to learn that the theme of this year's session is focusing on people's needs. Too often in global politics we devote too much time and attention to broad economic models and social systems, forgetting that politics and economics are in fact human issues. When we lose our focus on those issues, we inevitably lose sight of the goal that underpins our shared efforts, which should be that of ensuring peace and well-being for every individual and family in every State through a policy whose goal is to serve the people and meet their needs, and that is based on the notion of the dignity that is inherent in human life.

As we address a people-centred policy that is focused on the human need to live in peace and in decent conditions, we should first and foremost consider the importance of defending and protecting human life. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we all adopted, defines a global model for sustainable development. In line with its recommendations, we should concentrate our efforts on the elimination of poverty in all its manifestations through the implementation of a series of economic, social and environmental goals. At the same time, we must bear in mind that this process should be accompanied by respect for all our interconnected rights, including economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights and the right to development. While in adopting the 2030 Agenda we demonstrated our ability to take action as a community,

the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals remains a formidable challenge that will require close cooperation at the international level.

As a reliable and responsible partner, Poland is committed to the full implementation of the Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that only through their effective implementation will we be able to ensure the achievement of the desired socioeconomic conditions for all. That involves coordination and comprehensive action across many sectors and at all levels of Government, from local to national to regional to international. Domestically, Poland is taking concrete steps to implement its vision for development in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda to ensure that none of its citizens is left behind.

The strategy for responsible development that the Polish Government adopted in February is designed to ensure that Poland and its people can maintain a level of development that is sustainable, stable and, most important, responsible, and that will embrace both current and, especially, future generations. In the international arena, Poland supports countries that, among other things, are seeking to develop economically through development cooperation. We want to ensure that our actions are as effective as possible, and therefore, using the experience of the Polish authorities and non-governmental organizations, we are working with States that we can support most effectively.

We are deeply concerned about the growing number of people who are suffering as a result of protracted conflicts, particularly in Syria and Ukraine. Guided by the principle of solidarity, we have also been consistently increasing our humanitarian aid. In our view, it is also very important to ensure cohesion and complementarity between humanitarian aid and development aid and to work to eliminate the underlying causes of humanitarian crises. That is our shared duty, and the future of the world order and the international community depends upon how we deliver on it. In addition, we should not fail to continue to respect and strengthen international humanitarian law.

One of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda is halting the changes occurring in our natural environment, which can be seen in every country and on every continent, and which have are having negative effects on national economies and the living standards of entire communities. For a number of years, Poland has been part of global efforts to protect the environment and combat climate change. We have fulfilled our obligations in that regard, surpassing our reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. We have worked in concert with the European Union to make an exceedingly ambitious global contribution to the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and will continue our low-carbon development efforts with the aim of protecting our climate.

Next year, for the third time, Poland will have the honour of hosting the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24). COP 24, to be held in the city of Katowice, will be of key importance, owing to the Conference's expected adoption of the implementation package for the Paris Agreement. As President of the COP, Poland will do its best to ensure that the summit's outcome is an ambitious one. We will continue to demonstrate leadership in climate negotiations, in the spirit of the Paris Agreement, while ensuring that all States can participate and that the discussions are transparent, while respecting countries' varying domestic conditions and their choices along the path to reducing emissions.

Poland's election to the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the period 2018-2019 reflects my country's growing potential and its involvement in efforts to ensure international peace and security. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the 190 votes cast for Poland, one of the best results in the history of elections to the Council. For us, the election and its result are both a huge honour and a major obligation. I would like to thank the United Nations community for placing their confidence in us. We view our membership in the Security Council as a commitment to representing all States Members of the United Nations, regardless of their affiliations with regional groups.

We see the Security Council as representing values that are particularly important to my nation. First and foremost, they include our firm attachment to the inalienable right of every nation to sovereignty and freedom. We are joining the Security Council in the conviction that international law is the only effective mechanism for preserving peaceful relations among nations. Freedom is synonymous with peace, while enslavement is a source of war. Principles such as the freedom of speech and sovereign nation States' right to self-determination are of particular importance to

security. I bring this subject up because last year in particular saw an increase in instances in many States where political processes were manipulated through the imposition of hybrid measures, either by means of propaganda or direct interference in the democratic process. Such attempts by third countries to influence the democratic policies pursued by free nations should also be of concern to the international community.

Such issues, as well as analysis of current international relations, serve to emphasize that security in the modern world should be viewed from many platforms. It is not just a State's military strength that determines its citizens' sense of security, but also areas that often transcend the regular purview of the Security Council's work. Changes in the natural environment, economic disparities, conflicts fuelled by competition over natural resources, and inadequate health care can also undermine that sense of security, and I believe those issues should feature permanently on the Council's agenda.

Respect for, and the absolute primacy of, international law in relations among States safeguard our effectiveness in ensuring international peace and security. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Poland will strive to ensure that all disputes and conflicts are resolved in line with the fundamental principle of peaceful settlement. In that context, we fully agree with the high priority that should be given to mediation and conflict prevention, as advocated by the Secretary-General, and which accords with our belief that preventive measures that target the underlying sources of problems on the ground produce the best, quickest and most tangible results.

When I visited the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa earlier this year, I discussed the importance of the international community's ability to prevent conflicts. Conflicts do not exist without root causes and, by the same token, there are no conflicts that cannot be brought to an end. We should apply that approach first and foremost, though not exclusively, to issues related to mass migration and refugees, which represent problems that many regions and continents share. The continuing internal clashes and risks of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as all the challenges that they entail, call for a common response on the part of the whole international community. That is why it is our duty to eliminate the root causes of the refugee problem and restore the right of all people to live in their home countries. Humanitarian operations and development aid must be aimed at achieving the fundamental goal of helping refugees in order ultimately to help them return to their homes. Operations that help to build the resilience of States and societies are particularly important to efforts to deal with issues such as structural poverty, unemployment and lack of access to education.

Poland has always considered ensuring the effectiveness of international law to be of prime importance. Its regulations are founded on the principles of cooperation and meeting international obligations in good faith, thereby ensuring that international disputes can be resolved through dialogue rather than aggression and armed violence. In dealing with situations in which States use aggression as an instrument of foreign policy, Poland urges the international community to refrain from recognizing the faits accomplis that can result from such policies.

We in Poland want to help to build an international order founded on the principles of State sovereignty and territorial integrity. Any attempt to violate those principles, successful or not, weakens mutual trust. For almost 10 years in Georgia, and almost three in Ukraine, we have witnessed clear violations of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the inviolability of borders, respect for sovereignty and rejection of the use of military force in the settlement of disputes. In our view, absolute respect for international law creates a foundation for the stable, predictable and peaceful settlement of differences among States, and through that the assurance of truly sustainable growth.

The situation in the Korean peninsula has been marked by flagrant attempts to disrupt the prevailing world order that have contributed to the growing risk of escalation of the situation in the region. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development of a nuclear and missile programme, as well as its most recent tests of nuclear weapons, constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We hope that the international community will continue its intensified efforts in that regard, including the Council's recent adoption of new resolutions, and enable us to halt the spiral of tension and stabilize the situation in the region.

Poland sets great store by the goals of disarmament and the idea of a world free of nuclear weapons. The only instrument at hand that can genuinely bring us closer to achieving that vision is the Treaty on the

Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Treaty is subject to review every five years in order to take stock of progress towards its realization and reinforce its commitments. Poland has now taken the lead in the preparation process for the upcoming NPT Review Conference in 2020, a testament to our longstanding commitment to non-proliferation, a ban on nuclear tests and the peaceful use of atomic energy.

The third pillar of the United Nations system is the protection of human rights, whose foundation is the fundamental right to life. Regrettably, there are too many places in the world that have been stripped of that right, as well as the right to human dignity, personal freedom and freedom of conscience and religion. One particularly visible problem in that regard is the persecution of religious minorities, including Christians. Poland condemns in the strongest terms every instance of persecution and discrimination based on religion and insists on the importance of States' commitments to ensuring protection to all members of religious minorities, in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The right to live in dignity should also include the right to uphold one's native traditions and traditional family model, as long as they are compatible with the fundamental rights of individuals.

In its campaign for membership of the Security Council, Poland chose the motto "Solidarity, responsibility, engagement". Those are the values that we are constantly seeking to promote in the international arena. Only through a sense of shared responsibility, coupled with harmonious engagement and cooperation among all States, will we be able to achieve sustainable development, security and peace, and not only today, but for generations to come.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Al Sisi (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success in carrying out his duties. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Mr. Peter Thomson, the outgoing President, who so ably oversaw the Assembly's work at its seventy-first session.

Each time we meet in this Hall, we rekindle the hopes and aspirations of the peoples whom we are honoured to represent and serve. We hope to provide them with peace and development. New generations look up to us to realize their dreams for a decent life within a just international order. It is a global order that can face challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, diseases and epidemics, as well as other man-made crises — war, terrorism and huge discrepancies in the distribution of resources and development opportunities.

It is evident that the purposes and principles of the United Nations are still valid as a basis for a world that offers everyone an opportunity to benefit from the great strides being made in scientific advancement and economic development, as well as from the information revolution, which has brought societies unprecedentedly closer. Those developments offer great potential for establishing a fair and secure international order — one that is based on the right to development, freedom and progress and open interactions between people. In Egypt, we adamantly believe in the values of the United Nations and the purposes of its Charter. We have great confidence that realizing those values is not only possible, but rather an obligation and a necessity.

Egypt's long-standing involvement with the United Nations — both as a founding Member of the Organization that has been elected to the Security Council six times and as the seventh-largest contributor to peacekeeping operations worldwide — bears witness to our constant striving to build a world that is worthy

of the aspirations of our children and grandchildren to live in freedom, dignity, security and prosperity.

However, the responsibility that we bear requires that we be frank in saying that the world we seek, albeit possible, unfortunately still remains far from reality. We are still unable to prevent armed conflict, confront terrorism, eliminate nuclear weapons or address the structural imbalances in the international economic order that have widened the gap between the developed and developing worlds. Based on the experiences of the African and Arab regions, I can state with a clear conscience that those experiences summarize the current crisis of the international order and its inability to deliver on the goals of the United Nations.

The Arab region, Egypt's civilizational and cultural milieu, has today become an epicentre for some of the most vicious civil conflicts in recent human history. It is the region most vulnerable to the dangers posed by terrorism. One out of every three refugees in the world today is an Arab, and the Mediterranean Sea has become a conduit for irregular migrants from Asian and African States fleeing the scourge of civil strife, as well as the despair of economic and social hardships. That is reflected in the Arab regional report on multidimensional poverty in Arab countries published by the League of Arab States in collaboration with the United Nations. The report will be issued tomorrow.

As Egypt's geographical home, Africa lies at the heart of Egypt's foreign policy. It is Africa where our historic roots lie, and it is from Africa that we derive pride in our identity and our deep sense of belonging. The continent has also become subject to the same security threats facing the Arab region and constitutes a major example of the crisis in the current international economic order that perpetuates poverty and economic disparity. This global order bears a major responsibility in the economic, political and social crises that threaten international peace and stability, rendering any discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals just words without evidence based on reality.

Egypt is therefore encircled by the most dangerous crises in the world. It is our destiny to navigate confidently through those unprecedented dangers, while relying on an ambitious development strategy based on radical, bold economic reforms. Those reforms aim, above all else, to empower the youth, who represent the majority of the population, not only in Egypt but also in most of the Arab countries and the developing world.

In a world that is interconnected, complex and full of challenges that cannot be confronted by one country alone, regardless of its capabilities, it is natural for Egypt's ambitious development plans to correlate with an active foreign policy. That foreign policy strategy is guided by the long-established moral principles ingrained in our heritage and culture and abides by the legal principles of the international system, which Egypt actively participated in formulating. It is based on a vision to address the shortcomings that have prevented the realization of the objectives of the United Nations. Our vision is based on the following five main principles and priorities.

First, the only possible solution to the crises afflicting the Arab region is through persistently upholding the notion of the modern nation-State based on the principles of citizenship, equality, the rule of law and human rights, and thereby defeating any attempts to retreat into doctrinal, sectarian, ethnic or tribal loyalties. The path towards reform inevitably includes embracing the nation-State and cannot be built on its demise. This principle, in summary, lies at the core of Egypt's foreign policy and is the foundation upon which we base our positions in addressing the crises in our region.

With regard to brotherly Syria, we believe there will be no salvation for Syria except through a consensual political solution among all Syrians. At its core is the preservation of the unity of the Syrian State, the maintenance of its institutions and the broadening of its political and social base to include all sectors of Syrian society, as well as the decisive confrontation of terrorism until it is defeated. The way to this solution is through the United Nations-led negotiation process, which enjoys strong support from Egypt. Equally as strong is our objection to any attempt to manipulate the tragedy in Syria to establish international or regional zones of influence or carry out the subversive policies of some regional parties — parties whose practices have caused great suffering to our region over the past few years. It is now high time for a final and decisive confrontation with those practices.

Similarly, we believe that a political settlement is the only viable solution to the crisis in Libya. Libya continues to face attempts to dismantle the State and turn it into an open field for tribal conflict, a field of operations for terrorist organizations. I would like clearly to underscore that Egypt will not allow the continuation of attempts to tamper with the unity

and integrity of the Libyan State or undermine the capabilities of the Libyan people. We will continue to work diligently with the United Nations to achieve a political settlement based on the Skhirat Agreement and inspired by the recommendations agreed upon by Libyans. The recommendations that emerged from their consecutive meetings in Cairo during the past months aim to end the political stalemate and revive the settlement process in the country.

The same logic applies to Egypt's strategy in Iraq and Yemen: the only way to overcome the crises is with a unified, capable and just modern nation-State that realizes the legitimate aspirations of the Arab people.

Secondly, it is time for a comprehensive and final settlement to the longest-standing crisis in the Arab region, namely, the question of Palestine. This is a clear depiction of the international community's inability to implement a long series of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The closure of this chapter — through a fair settlement based on established international norms and by establishing an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital — is a necessary precondition for the entire region to transition into a phase of stability and development. That is also necessary to restore the credibility of the United Nations and the international order.

Achieving peace will without a doubt eliminate one of the main excuses that terrorism has been using to justify its proliferation in the region. It will guarantee a dignified and peaceful life for the peoples of the region. It is time to permanently overcome the barrier of hatred forever. I would like to underscore here that Arabs still extend their hand in peace. Egypt's experience proves that peace is possible, and is indeed a realistic objective that we should all continue to pursue seriously.

Before I continue my statement, allow me to veer off script for a moment and call directly upon everyone who is concerned by this issue.

My first audience is the Palestinian people. I say to them that it is extremely important to unite behind a common goal, overcome differences, not to lose opportunities and be ready to accept coexistence with the other — with Israelis — to achieve stability and security for all.

I now direct my call to the Israeli people. In Egypt we have an excellent track record of peace with Israelis that spans more than 40 years. It is possible to repeat that experience — an excellent step to achieve peace and security for both Israeli and Palestinian citizens. My call to Israelis is to stand behind their political leadership and support it without hesitation. I urge the Israeli public not to hesitate. We are all with them for the success of that attempt. This opportunity might not repeat itself.

My other call is to all nations that love peace and stability. All Arab States support Israel's excellent endeavour. Other nations, too, must support its endeavour, which, if successful, will change the face of history.

I also address the American leadership and the American President: we have an opportunity to turn over a new page in human history and achieve peace in the region.

The third of my main principles and priorities is that it is impossible to envisage a future for the regional or international order in which we have not definitively and comprehensively addressed terrorism. That should be approached in a manner that eradicates terrorism and eliminates its roots and causes, while also openly challenging any party that supports or finances terrorism or that offers it political and media channels or safe havens.

Frankly, there is no room for any serious discussion on the credibility of a system that applies double standards — a system that fights terrorism while tolerating its supporters and engaging them in discussions on how to eliminate a threat that they created in the first place. To be truthful and faithful to our peoples, members of various international alliances should answer the pertinent questions that we are raising out of devotion to our people. Answers are usually avoided by those who prefer duplicity to attain narrow political interests in the demise of States and at the expense of blood shed by their people. We will not allow our peoples' sacrifices to be made in vain, under any circumstances.

We in the Muslim world need to face up to our reality and work together to rectify the misconstrued notions that have become an ideological pretext for terrorism and its destructive discourse. As members may recall, Egypt launched an initiative to rectify religious discourse in order to revive the true and tolerant values of Islam. Egypt's religious institutions

are currently engaged in that process, in coordination with the relevant international entities.

Egypt, which is currently engaged in an unrelenting battle to eradicate terrorism from its territory, is committed to tracking, confronting and eliminating terrorism decisively, wherever it exists. It is evident that confronting terrorism has been at the forefront of Egypt's priorities during its 2016-2017 membership in the Security Council and during our chairmanship of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. We do not wish to defend only Egypt's future, but also the future of the international community as a whole.

Our fourth priority is to eliminate the root causes of international crises and the sources of threat to international stability, That requires the operationalization of the principle of a common but differentiated responsibility among the members of the international community, in order to narrow the economic and social gaps between developed and developing countries.

How can the United Nations, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals have any credibility when the international economic order is itself responsible for augmenting disparities, in a manner inconsistent with the values of justice and equality? How can there be any opportunity for less developed countries, no matter how determined they are, to implement fundamental economic reforms to address the mismanagement of their resources without addressing imbalances in the international economic order? Such endeavours require greater involvement by developing countries in international economic governance structures and facilitating their access to easier financing, markets and technology transfer.

Fifthly, settling disputes in our world today can be achieved only through respect for the principles of international law and negotiation on the basis of legal, historic and moral principles, as well respect for the sovereignty of States and the principle of non-intervention in individual States' internal affairs. More than seven decades after the establishment of the United Nations, force and zero-sum games cannot remain as a means to realize interests — especially in today's world, which is based on interdependence among nations and where there are significant opportunities for cooperation and understanding to achieve the common interests of all.

Based on the principles I have mentioned, Egypt was at the forefront of countries eager to initiate the Nile Basin initiative in 1999. Egypt also pursued the conclusion of a trilateral agreement between Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia to address the issue of the Renaissance Dam from a cooperative perspective, in a manner that establishes a clear legal framework to manage the issue in accordance with international law, established principles and the well-established rules that govern relations between States sharing basins of transboundary rivers throughout the world. That agreement remains as a legal framework that can be used as an example to reflect the logic of cooperation and sharing among the three parties, as long as good faith continues. It is of paramount importance to implement the agreement, in the light of the limited amount of time available, to avoid squandering the opportunity of presenting a successful model to manage relations between three sisterly countries in the Nile basin.

Our meeting here today is an opportunity for truthful self-reflection, in which we should acknowledge the various deficiencies that are hindering the international system from delivering on the noble objectives and aspirations it was set up to realize. It is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to establish a more equitable international order, given that the attainment of justice globally remains a necessary condition to confront the immense challenges impacting our world today and endangering the credibility of the international system.

The humanitarian tragedy of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar is yet another reason to remind the international community of its moral obligations, not to mention its legal responsibilities, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations. We must promptly work towards a lasting solution that ends the plight of civilians and addresses the root causes of the crisis, which has become a threat to regional security and the stability of neighbouring countries.

Let us move together to empower the people of the world to regain control of their destinies and to explore new horizons of cooperation between members of the international community. Let us transcend the vicious cycle of narrow interests and the futile logic of power politics to the broader horizons of common human interests and cooperation among all. Let us be true to ourselves and dispel the mentality of polarizing policies. The world today is in dire need of the upholding of common human interests. It is incumbent upon all

States to strive to further relations among all partners with malice towards none.

I have conveyed Egypt's message to the General Assembly today explicitly and clearly. I am full of hope that our joint efforts during the upcoming period will lead to a better world that is more secure, stable and prosperous. Long live Egypt!

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mirziyoyev (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for this opportunity to speak from the high rostrum of the United Nations.

A few weeks ago, our people widely celebrated the twenty-sixth anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence. Today Uzbekistan is rapidly developing. While carefully preserving the wisdom of past generations, we are consciously moving forward with resolute reforms and are committed to creating a new image of the country.

Political activity is growing and in-depth reforms are being implemented in all spheres. Their goal is to forge a democratic State and a just society, where the priority is the implementation of a simple and clear principle: human interests come first. Following the results of nationwide discussions, the five-year development strategy for Uzbekistan was adopted. While developing it, we looked at ourselves from outside, so as to not only objectively assess our potential and the opportunities before us, but also to pay close attention to our failures and mistakes. The strategy is a programme of real actions for renewal; it is already being put into practice.

We have declared 2017 the Year of Dialogue with People and Human Interests in our country. Our goal is to strengthen the mechanisms that would make people's power in the country not nominal, but real. We are deeply convinced that it is not the people who must serve the Government bodies, but rather the Government bodies that must serve the people. We have established one Virtual and many People's Reception Offices of the President all over the country. Over 1 million citizens have been able to resolve their urgent problems with the help of those offices.

In cooperation with the International Labour Organization, we have taken effective measures to eradicate child labour and forced labour. Following the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Al Hussein, a programme of measures to strengthen guarantees for the protection of human rights was developed. We have abolished outdated legacies of the past such as exit visas, which impeded the freedom of movement. An open dialogue with national and international non-governmental organizations on the protection of human rights is being intensified.

Proceeding from the principles of humanism, many individual cases of detained persons have been reviewed. Misguided citizens who fell under the influence of the ideology of extremism are undergoing social rehabilitation, and conditions are being created for their return to normal life. The activities of all law-enforcement agencies in terms of protection of human rights and freedoms are under constant parliamentary and civil supervision.

The role of political parties and civil society is growing, and the genuine independence of the judiciary is being ensured. The role of the mass media has significantly increased. The most important direction for reforms is the liberalization of our economic system and the creation of a favourable investment climate. We base ourselves on one simple truth: the richer the people are, the stronger the State will be.

Since the beginning of the month, Uzbekistan has completely switched to a system of free conversion of the national currency. Along with that, all the necessary measures have been taken to mitigate any possible negative consequences for the population. For the first time, an institute of the ombudsman for the protection

of the rights of entrepreneurs was established. Taxes on business were significantly reduced. Access of business to credit was expanded. New free economic zones have been launched, where investors are granted extensive benefits. Cooperation with international financial institutions is being successfully developed, and partnership with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has been renewed. I want to note that the contents of the strategy are fully consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We are convinced that the United Nations must continue to play a central role in international relations. Uzbekistan champions its gradual reform. We believe that, in keeping with the realities of the modern world, the Security Council needs to be expanded. We support the steps taken by the new leadership of the United Nations to improve its management system. I want to reaffirm that Uzbekistan will continue its close partnership with United Nations structures. We are determined to ensure the practical implementation of the road map that was developed following the recent visit of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, to Uzbekistan.

Today Uzbekistan considers the region of Central Asia the main priority for its foreign policy, and that is a conscious choice. Lying at the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is keenly interested in seeing the region become a zone of stability, sustainable development and good-neighbourliness. A peaceful and economically prosperous Central Asia is our most important goal and key task.

Uzbekistan is determined to engage in dialogue, constructive interaction and strengthening good-neighbourliness. We are open to reasonable compromise with the countries of Central Asia on all issues without exception. Thanks to joint efforts in the region in recent months, political confidence has significantly increased. Fundamentally important decisions on many issues have been made.

The signing of the treaty on the State border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in early September was a truly landmark event. A breakthrough in that very sensitive issue, achieved for the first time in 26 years, became possible as a result of the political will demonstrated by both parties and their readiness to find mutually acceptable solutions. In a word, an absolutely new political atmosphere has been created in the region in a short period.

I believe that holding regular consultation meetings of the heads of Central Asian States would facilitate the consolidation of this trend. We intend to discuss the fundamental problems of the region at the high-level international conference on the theme "Central Asia: one past and common future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity", to be held in November in Samarkand under the auspices of the United Nations. Based on its results, we intend to make a proposal on the adoption of a special General Assembly draft resolution in support of the efforts of Central Asia to ensure security and enhancing regional cooperation. We count on support for that proposal by the leadership of the United Nations and the international community.

When speaking about the problems of ensuring security and stability in Central Asia, one cannot overlook an issue as important as the joint use of the region's shared water resources. We fully share the position of the Secretary-General that the problems of "water, peace and security are inextricably linked" (*S/PV.7959, p. 2*). I am convinced that there is no alternative to addressing the problem of water besides equally taking into account the interests of the countries and nations of the region. Uzbekistan supports the draft conventions on the use of water resources of the Amudarya and Syrdarya river basins, which were developed by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy.

I would like to once again draw the Assembly's attention to one of the most acute environmental problems of our time: the Aral Sea catastrophe. I am holding a map showing the Aral Sea tragedy — I believe that words are not necessary. Overcoming the consequences of the drying up of the sea requires the active consolidation of international efforts. We stand for the full implementation of the special United Nations programme to provide effective assistance to the population affected by the Aral Sea crisis, which was adopted this year.

The stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan is an important precondition to ensure not only regional security, but global security as well. We are convinced that the only way to peace in Afghanistan is a direct dialogue between the central Government and the main domestic political forces, held without preconditions. The negotiations should be Afghan-led, held on the territory of Afghanistan and under the auspices of the United Nations. The wise Afghan people have the right

to independently define their own destiny. We support the appeal of the Administration of United States President Donald Trump to Afghanistan's neighbouring States to promote the peace process and an inter-Afghan settlement. Uzbekistan will continue to contribute to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, as well as to the development of its transport and energy infrastructure and the training of national personnel. I am convinced that Afghanistan must remain at the heart of the global agenda. The efforts of the international community should primarily be aimed at resolving the acute social and economic problems of Afghanistan. Our common determination to promote peace in such a long-suffering country should not wane.

The aggravation of terrorist threats in the world, especially in recent years, indicates that the use of primarily forceful methods of counteraction is not justified. Often, efforts are reduced to combating the consequences of challenges, rather than addressing their root causes. I believe that, along with other factors, ignorance and intolerance are at the heart of international terrorism and extremism. In that regard, the most important task is to fight for the minds of people, especially young people. Most of the crimes linked with extremist activity and violence are committed by the people under the age of 30. Today's youth is the largest generation in the history of humankind, totalling 2 billion people. The planet's future and well-being depend upon what kind of people our children will grow up to be.

Our task is to provide conditions for the self-realization of the youth and create a barrier against the spread of the virus of the ideology of violence. We believe that, in order to achieve that, we need to develop necessary multilateral cooperation in the sphere of social support of the younger generation and bolster the protection of their rights and interests. In that regard, Uzbekistan proposes to develop a United Nations international convention on the rights of youth, which would constitute a unified, international legal instrument aimed at the development and implementation of youth policy, taking into account the conditions of globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technologies. In our opinion, States that accede to the convention would make firm commitments in order to raise the level of awareness with regard to one of the main, vital priorities of their social policies.

We consider communicating the humanistic essence of Islam to the broader world community to be one of the most important tasks at hand. We cherish our sacred religion as the focal point of time-honoured values. We strongly condemn and will never agree with those who equate our great faith with violence and bloodshed. Islam calls upon us to be kind and peaceful. It calls for the preservation of genuine humanity. I would like to especially note the invaluable contribution of a whole line of outstanding members of the Central Asian renaissance to the development of the Islamic and world civilization. One of them, Muhammad al-Bukhari, is acclaimed all over the world as the author of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the second-most important book in Islam after the Qur'an. In order to preserve and study his richest legacy and disseminate his teachings on enlightened Islam, we decided to establish the Imam Al-Bukhari International Research Center in Samarkand. The activities of the Center for Islamic Civilization, which is being established in Tashkent, will contribute to the implementation of that task.

I would like to address the participants at this meeting with a proposal to adopt a special draft resolution of the General Assembly on education and religious tolerance. Its main goal would be to promote universal access to education and eradicate illiteracy and ignorance. It would be designed to promote tolerance and mutual respect, ensure religious freedom, protect the rights of believers and prevent discrimination against them.

While steadfastly maintaining its non-aligned status, Uzbekistan is open to dialogue. We are interested in expanding cooperation with all partners in the name of peace, progress and prosperity. We see that cooperation as a vital precondition for the successful implementation of the most important tasks of reform carried out in our country, the main focus of which is people, their needs and their interests.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sargsyan (*spoke in Armenian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajcák on his election and wish him success in his duties as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also take this opportunity once again to congratulate Mr. António Guterres upon his appointment as Secretary-General. We wish him success in carrying out his important duties. Armenia supports the priorities that Secretary-General Guterres has declared.

In 2017, we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Armenia's accession to the United Nations. On 2 March 1992, the Armenian tricolour started flying at United Nations Headquarters, the logical and desired outcome of the Armenian people's quest to exercise their fundamental right to self-determination. Over the years, Armenia became a full-fledged, responsible member of the international community. We faced numerous challenges, but we withstood them with dignity. The Nagorno Karabakh conflict was the most important and daunting one. This is the fifth time that I speak from this rostrum, and again I need to address the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. I would have preferred to talk of peace, progress and cooperation but, unfortunately, we are still far from that stage. Hence, it is my duty to explain why we are so far from that desirable point.

The new phase of the Artsakh people's struggle for self-determination began almost 30 years ago. The Armenians of Artsakh used peaceful calls to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Azerbaijan has always responded to such calls with the use of force. The policy of the Baku Government culminated in the massacre, ethnic cleansing and mass deportation of the Armenian population of Azerbaijan. Districts with once-flourishing Armenian populations are now devoid of Armenians, and the Government of Azerbaijan continues with its policy of systematically destroying the vast Armenian cultural and spiritual heritage on the territories under its control. It is obvious that in those circumstances the people of Artsakh have had no other choice than to resort to self-defence. Azerbaijan did not learn any lessons from the perilous war of 1992-1994, its aftermath and negotiations. Last year in April, Azerbaijan unleashed a four-day war, which proved that Azerbaijan's objective is to exterminate the people of Artsakh.

In the course of the military hostilities, the Azerbaijan armed forces committed a number of war crimes against the civilian population and prisoners of war. I find it worth mentioning that one serviceman who committed such atrocities received a high State award, and the President of Azerbaijan personally decorated him in front of the cameras.

For years hate speech against Armenians was made part and parcel of the Azerbaijan State policy. It is firmly part of its school curriculums and poisons the upbringing and thinking of its younger generation. For years a number of intergovernmental and other specialized organizations dealing with racism and xenophobia have raised the alarm.

All of this leads us to the conclusion that the Artsakh people's exercise of the right to self-determination is of vital importance. In that regard, I express the views of Armenia, the Artsakh and of all Armenians all over the globe. I bring this message from Yerevan, where the sixth Armenia diaspora conference is currently taking place.

Everyone should be aware that for the Artsakh people, who are building democracy, Azerbaijan simply symbolizes medieval backwardness. Azerbaijan has no legal or moral grounds whatsoever to present any claims on Artsakh. Artsakh has never been part of independent Azerbaijan, and it is not fair to attempt to annex Artsakh to that State order. Today free Artsakh is an established democratic society. Our shared motto and commitment of leaving no one behind should be the hallmark guiding the work of the United Nations family. For that very reason, I believe that the people of Artsakh should never be excluded from the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I strongly believe that the unresolved status of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should have no impact on

the people of Artsakh as they exercise their rights. It is, first and foremost, about the inalienable rights of any human being, the right to life, to organize public life, to freely form one's own Government, to communicate unimpededly with the outer world, and about many other rights. Armenia consistently contributes and will contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the Artsakh people and to its sustainable and democratic development. No one has a right to create hindrances to the implementation of initiatives and projects to that effect. The legal status of Artsakh, or, to be more precise, the lack of international legal recognition, is not an impediment to the exercise of the rights of the men and women living there.

We strongly believe that there is no alternative to a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Right now, from this rostrum, I reiterate our commitment to that effect. Meanwhile, everyone should be aware that the Nagorno Karabakh issue is a human rights issue, one that can be resolved exclusively through one of the fundamental and inalienable human rights — the people's right to self-determination. At the end of the day, whatever option for resolving the conflict we arrive at, the Republic of Artsakh should not enjoy a status and liberty inferior to the one it enjoys today. Azerbaijan will recognize and respect the right of the people of Artsakh to decide their own future through the free expression of their will. All available international and domestic mechanisms should guarantee the security of the Armenian population of Artsakh. All remaining issues are collateral in nature and will be resolved in a logical and fair manner in conjunction with the general resolution process.

When I last spoke from this rostrum and addressed the process of international recognition of the Armenian genocide (see A/71/PV.17), I considered it my duty to express our gratitude to all those nations, one by one, that had recognized the horrendous crime that was committed against my people by the Ottoman Empire. It is my duty to express gratitude here to all those countries that displayed honour and responsibility by recognizing, or reiterating their position on, the Armenian genocide. I thank them for that initiative, regardless of the format and language adopted. I thank the numerous countries and individuals, State bodies, regional entities and organizations that called things by their proper names. That is indeed important, since denial paves the way for new crimes of genocide. In that context, we recall that next year the United Nations family will mark the seventieth anniversary of the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Armenia will propose a new initiative on that occasion, and we invite everyone to join us and support it.

Nevertheless, we have never made recognition of the Armenian genocide a precondition for the normalization of bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey. Moreover, it was at the initiative of Armenia that a normalization process was launched, resulting in the conclusion of the Zurich protocols in October 2009. Those documents have not been ratified thus far; instead they have been left in some dark drawer in Ankara. The Government of Turkey came up with preposterous preconditions for their ratification that run counter to the letter and spirit of the protocols. I expressed the clear-cut views of the Armenian people on that issue three years ago (see A/69/PV.6), when I spoke from this rostrum. Now the time is ripe for additional explanations.

The leadership of Turkey is mistaken if it thinks that it can keep those documents hostage forever and ratify them only at the most opportune occasion from its point of view. The protocols were negotiated in the existing circumstances at the time in order to find solutions to the then existing issues. Armenia will declare those two protocols null and void, since there has been no progress towards their implementation. We will enter the spring of 2018 without those, as our experience has demonstrated, futile Protocols.

Armenia nevertheless continues to believe that any two neighbouring States need to establish and enjoy normal relations in order to address any possible disagreement between them and find solutions. That is the credo we are guided by in our engagement with various integration processes. Armenia today is an active member of the Eurasian Economic Union and spares no effort in contributing to the unimpeded movement of goods and services in that large economic area. In that way, we promote welfare for all. We have already registered certain achievements in that regard, and that makes us feel hopeful for the future. We also plan to conclude an Armenia-European Union comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement in November, which, in our view, will help give new impetus to the institutional reforms being implemented in Armenia.

The current instability in the Middle East regretfully remains as a serious challenge. It is with great pain that we have been following the crisis in Syria and the humanitarian situation there, which has brought about the suffering of the civilian population, including the country's Armenian community. Armenia is doing what it can to mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people by providing humanitarian assistance. We also express our willingness to engage in possible discussions on the peacemaking efforts in Syria under the United Nations auspices and with an appropriate mandate.

I have no doubt that the United Nations family can ensure the needed cooperation to address modern global and regional challenges. It is with that objective in mind that Armenia participates in a number of the United Nations peacekeeping operations. Moreover, we stand ready to increase our contribution in Lebanon and Mali — respectively, to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

As a landlocked country with scarce natural resources located in a complex region, Armenia has continuously emphasized that it considers human beings to be its most valuable resource. That is indeed the case both for Armenia and for the whole United Nations family — we should focus on people and we should strive for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Armenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Costa Rica.

Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Solís Rivera (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica congratulates the President on his election and welcomes the priorities that he has established for his tenure. I would like to reiterate my country's commitment to working with him and all Member States to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to help swiftly honour the pledges made in Paris and Marrakesh to mitigate climate change, to implement the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to strengthen global governance and multilateralism as areas of supreme importance for the maintenance of international peace and stability.

I also wish to convey a message of solidarity and sympathy to the people and the Government of Mexico for the human and material losses resulting from the earthquake that struck its capital and surrounding areas today.

Every word, statement and action adopted in this Hall keeps alive Kant's hope and inspiring confidence in humankind. To build a world based on the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the treaties on the non-proliferation of weapons and the treaties on nuclear disarmament and prohibition is an acknowledgement of the multiple challenges that human communities face. They also evoke our sincere conviction in reaching globally agreed responses to the most urgent threats to humankind.

Those milestones are recent pieces in the renowned understanding of those who, before us and in pressing circumstances, fought for dignified coexistence, for freedom as a life-long mandate and for keeping hope alive as a daily imperative. Our duty as leaders consists in leading our nations towards sustainable human development. Therein lies the ethical power of our actions, both in domestic affairs and in the Assembly — the importance of which calls for an active commitment to ensure the well-being of our nations and to fight against inequality, injustice and violence. It means inconveniencing those who are opposed to the world being a radiant, open and unbiased hearth for us all, rather than a free aspiration of resistance and misunderstanding.

In the face of that wall of short-sightedness or malice, Costa Rica has always chosen honest work — the tireless ability to provide for one another with generosity, despite our small size. My country has chosen compassion, solidarity and peacebuilding as

the main values in fully respecting human rights. In that framework, it has made international law, active multilateralism and the rejection of environmental destruction as the ideal mechanisms for resolving conflicts domestically and among States. That, in short, will always be our commitment to humankind.

In September 2016, Costa Rica became the first country to enter into a national pact to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the concrete step of involving representatives at the highest levels in the country, local representatives and representatives from the business sector, churches, social organizations and academia — all of which have actively committed to seeking the implementation of those comprehensive goals. Through that initiative, we have aligned our 2015-2018 national development plan with the Sustainable Development Goals and the sectoral goals of national and local programmes and projects. Additionally, we established a functional strategy for the planning, implementation and monitoring of those goals — which operates on the basis of consultation, dialogue and accountability.

Two years ago, I stated in this very Hall (see A/70/PV.19) that Costa Rica would commit to the design and implementation of the adequate instruments to wage a real and sustainable campaign against poverty. Given its multidimensional character, we adopted a multidimensional poverty index along with a multi-actor functional governance structure, which was one of the most important factors in the poverty reduction achieved for the first time in seven years in Costa Rica — through a coordinated and structured ownership in decision-making, initiative design and strategy implementation at a national level.

In the same vein, Costa Rica and 42 other countries gathered here presented a voluntary national report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the United Nations. Moreover, Costa Rica and the other States members of the Central American Integration System sponsored the harmonization of the regional Central America agenda with the same objectives.

Costa Rica has understood and taken on the integrated universal and multidimensional nature of the SDGs. We therefore believe that its implementation requires policy and public management innovation. Leaving no one behind is a State and Government responsibility, but those entities cannot act alone. That is why the 2030 Agenda must be based on consensus, the creation of synergies and the creative participation and commitment of various actors and productive sectors — above all, in the commitment and call to action of the Assembly. Leaving no one behind is more than just a slogan, it is a forceful call to action for all the segments that make up our societies. That is why I commend the contents and the quality of the Secretary-General's report for the repositioning of the United Nations development system so as to honour the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda.

I believe that is the appropriate path to coordinate and carry out comprehensive actions that respond to the current and future needs of sustainable development. In that regard, we must consider the needs of middle-income countries. I believe it is advisable to continue the efforts carried out thus far and to continue to promote the interests of middle-income countries, with a view to the United Nations offering them more efficient, targeted and better coordinated support.

Costa Rica wishes to stress the importnace of countries and the United Nations system reconsidering the concept of per capita income as the gauge for determining a country's progress. Only a multidimensional view of development, especially a multidimensional view of poverty, will allow us to understand the needs of the people and families and the individuals that make it up, as it relates to access to health care, the elimination of inequality, promoting gender equality and attention to social, economic and environmental weakness, among other challenges of developing nations.

With due respect but also with urgency, I call on the Secretary-General to promote open spaces to establish work strategies that would strengthen the capacities of such countries and allow them to cooperate more effectively with other middle-income countries and with less-developed countries. For those countries, reaching the Sustainable Development Goals will be impossible unless economic, social and environmental problems are incorporated into a path of comprehensive action.

As a universal forum, the United Nations has a privileged position for consolidating the consultation process of middle-income countries. Amartya Sen has said with incontrovertible authority that to speak of the development of a particular society, we must analyse the lives of those who live within it, and that

there can be no economic success without considering the quality of life of communities, which is one and the same with that of each of its members. That thesis gives special attention to minority groups that have been historically excluded from fully exercising their rights and denied the understanding of the societies in which they live — especially if their nature requires the adoption of targeted processes in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

That complexity requires taking a closer look at productive sectors, such as family agriculture — the primary source of income for 70 per cent of the global rural population, that is, 40 per cent of the global population. Close to 500 million small farms provide 80 per cent of the food consumed by the developing world. In many cases, they are the historical basis for the productive development of entire nations, as is the case in my country. Family agriculture has a crucial role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as it integrates the goals and is the basis for the sustainable production of food, for the environmental management of rural and marine territory and for biodiversity — as a source of significant cultural expressions of each people. It is, without a doubt, a fundamental pillar of the integrated development of nations. In that regard, alongside a group of countries from different parts of the world, Costa Rica will be honoured to present a draft resolution at the current session to declare the decade of family agriculture 2019-2028 — inspired by the success of the International Year of Family Agriculture, adopted by the Assembly in 2014 as resolution 66/222.

Gender equality continues to be a goal of quintessential importance in all nations. Every day, more women strive to be fully recognized and to exercise their rights. Their struggle is inherent in the building of truly democratic societies and of peaceful coexistence in all countries. Moreover, without equal rights for women, it will be impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by the target date set by the Organization.

The literature is vast and the political declarations are forceful in highlighting the noticeable democratic gaps and the resulting detriment to development due to the persistence of patriarchal and chauvinist structures forged in another time but revived today absent education regarding human rights and respect for democratic coexistence. Gender inequality is not a topic that is foreign to us, nor a phenomenon that unfolds covertly in the internal relations of countries beyond our purview, but rather it is occurring in front of our very eyes. Let us take a moment to look around us. It is imperative to take joint action to ensure that equality in this important organ. My country has understood that commitment and welcomes work proposals from International Gender Champions that seek to revert the trend of gender inequality within the United Nations and to take concrete actions for the seventy-second session by calling on the Gender Champions to promote equilibrium within each delegation that attends the general debate during the Assembly's week of high-level debate.

Women's effective participation in the economic sectors of their societies has a deep and significant impact on other areas of independence, as an economically empowered woman is a person with the tools and capabilities necessary to make a positive impact on her community and her family. While it is true that many women work, are entrepreneurs, are employed in the public and private sectors and are scientists and artists, millions of others work in the informal sector or do domestic work and unpaid care. It is estimated that women's unpaid work is equivalent to $10 billion per year, or 13 per cent of the global gross domestic product. However, if I were to choose a single insulting and absurd example of this discrimination, the one that angers me the most is that the average woman's salary is 25 per cent lower the average man's salary for the same job.

I had the honour to co-chair the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, along with Ms. Simona Scarpaleggia, Chief Executive Officer of IKEA Switzerland, at the request of former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UN-Women. The final report of the Panel, in which women from the entire world participated, concluded,

> "that it is essential to expand social protection coverage and access to justice with due process; that care is also an economic activity whose contribution should be reflected in countries' productivity; that men should share responsibility for fulfilling this work and private companies and public institutions are called on to encourage it; that women have the challenge of accessing digital and financial services, as well as of being deed owners in land redistribution; that companies must recognize women's leadership; that it is urgent that States' macroeconomic policies empower

women and promote decent jobs for them; that laws that discriminate must be amended and others that encourage equality must be enacted; that affirmative policies on hiring women must be extended to public institutions and private companies and women-owned businesses must be promoted; and that it is necessary to reinforce support to informal women workers and women agricultural workers".

Of course, we must adopt a multidimensional and intersectoral strategy to address the barriers to women's economic empowerment. In that regard, Costa Rica has in place a public policy that guarantees women's employability on an equal basis. The main objective of this policy is to eliminate women's lack of access to, and permanence in, the workplace. The private sector is the key actor in that, as it is the main source of employment and national development. This practice is part of the new trend in international markets and the global economy, where companies seek to increase their productivity through innovation, the improvement of the work environment, the attraction of talent and the adoption of values and practices based on human rights.

Nevertheless, we recognize that multiple challenges remain to making progress towards substantive equality for women. We are determined to incorporate women in paid work, with measures that eradicate gender-based division in the workplace and facilitate economic independence and quality of life as necessary conditions for the full enjoyment of human rights.

With the Assembly's permission, for just a moment, I would like to convey this message in English to all the women who, with their work, raise up their families and local and national communities.

(*spoke in English*)

Today I extend my recognition to all women on Earth. They are capable enough to move ahead despite the rigid and rude patriarchal heritage that tends to not acknowledge their abilities and accomplishments and that fills with doubts and dangers their road towards full autonomy. They are an example for others: their internal strength leads them to break the chains of oppression, rise above the misery of migration and forced displacement and free entire communities from various forms of slavery. And in the grim march of their lives, they devote themselves with great passion to their people; they are sensitive and protective even when their love and generosity are not understood or repaid. They are masters of resilience, since they have learned how to deal with bad people and painful moments. They know how to fulfil their roles of mother, partner, friend or leader, and they dedicate themselves to them even if they need to sacrifice themselves because of a superior responsibility, a greater good that they accomplish with sincere devotion, aware of the risks and bearing in mind that they are an example to other women that follow in their steps.

Definitely, it is not easy being a Khaleesi. Whether in fiction or in real life, the goal of equality is much greater than what our circumstances relegate us to. Today is a good day to look at ourselves in the mirror, start to create truly equal relations and bring this long night to an end.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

My generation's grandparents could not have foreseen the consequences that industrialization and business models would have on the climate. We, the grandparents of future generations, can. That is why we cannot be indifferent. It is true that for decades humankind has had the resources and scientific knowledge to precisely measure the behaviour of endless variables related to the environment and that it can project future scenarios for weather conditions in different parts of the world and the impact they would have on humans and their social, productive and cultural activities. These capabilities commit us at levels seldom encountered throughout the history of humankind. They saddle us with an ethical and moral responsibility about the future of life on Earth and the terms of the interactions among human groups and between humans and their environment.

There is enough evidence to support the idea that a transformative solution to climate change is within human capabilities. That is why we welcome the French initiative of a global pact for the environment, which would complement the legal framework of the international agreements adopted by the United Nations in 1966. We are also pleased to be a member of the group of friends, which under the leadership of Slovenia, Switzerland, Morocco and Maldives, promotes the draft resolution on human rights and the environment that is being coordinated in the Human Rights Council. Also, along with countries of the Independent Association of Latin America and the Caribbean, we have exercised a positive leadership position in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change, building bridges between negotiating groups and making proposals.

Our countries must adopt increasingly ambitious positions on environmental conservation and in the fight against climate change and understand the right to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment as an essential right of every human being and of future generations. The international community can count on the unconditional and unrestricted support of the Costa Rican people and Government in promoting this vital agenda. It is my pleasure to inform the plenary that, with the shared leadership of Chile and Costa Rica, Latin America is moving towards establishing a regional instrument on the rights of access to information, participation and justice on environmental matters. The initiative aims to produce more effective agreements in the context of socio-environmental conflicts through an environmental governance programme in which the State acts as a facilitator in agreement and decision-making spaces with the participation of all interested and affected stakeholders. It includes the principles of precaution, reparation and non-regression.

We reaffirm our intention to guide our economy towards carbon neutrality, as part of the pre-2020 voluntary actions, and we are expanding our long-term commitments towards the in-depth decarbonization of the economy. Our electrical grid continues to be an example of planning and renewable energy use for the world, thanks to long periods of energy generation based solely on renewable sources — in water, wind, geothermal sources, biomass and sunlight. In addition to the offsetting process of our forests, we are reducing emissions in critical sectors, such as transport, livestock and waste. We have set an absolute emission limit for 2030 that is equivalent to a 25 per cent decrease in emissions as compared with 2012. That places us in a privileged position to become a green centre for management, innovation and knowledge transfer. We invite our strategic partners to join this effort.

It is clear that we cannot not improve the health of our oceans if we do not change our land production and consumption. In that regard, our recently issued national wastewater sanitation policy and our national strategy for plastics replacement seek to stop pollution resulting from land-based activities and reverse their cumulative effects. To that end, straws, coffee stirrers and plastic containers are to be replaced. In addition, we are working to end destructive fishing practices and to coordinate efforts so that coastal populations can develop from the use and sustainable management of marine-coastal resources.

Along the same conservation lines, we presented our national wetlands policy, which seeks to ecologically rehabilitate the Costa Rican wetland ecosystems and to promote actions for their sustainable and participatory use, as well as the establishment of a framework planned over the long term in order to restore the national wetland systems and ensure its responsible use in order to contribute to improving the quality of life of the communities that use it.

We believe that all those efforts not only encourage a focus on and the mitigation of climate change, but they also have an impact on human rights and public policies that promote gender equality, non-discrimination and the enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples. That is why we also welcome the process to prepare the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees.

In that regard, I would like to recall the principle of the progressivity of human rights — an essential principle that implies expanding the range of rights granted, from which we cannot go back. But above all, it entails the idea that we are called on to provide our inhabitants with increasingly more and better guarantees that allow the free and full exercise of each of those rights.

The twentieth century witnessed some of the greatest and most atrocious conflicts that humankind has experienced. The end of the Second World War marked an even greater threat, one with the potential to destroy our species. The nuclear arms race was, for much of the second half of the last century, a constant concern that threatened the continuance of the human family.

Costa Rica views with great concern the events developing on the Korean peninsula. The increase in the warmongering rhetoric on that part of the Asian continent implies a serious and real threat to the peace and stability not only of the region, but of the world. Costa Rica is amazed by how, almost three decades after the end of the Cold War, ghosts that we thought had been banished forever reappeared in a world where there is need for more medicine, not rifles, more schools, not barracks, and more projects to provide drinkable water than facilities to produce weapons of mass destruction.

That is why we strongly and vehemently condemn the nuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We will always support dialogue, active diplomacy and multilateralism. We call on the parties involved and on the Security Council to take an active role in avoiding escalations of tension that could lead to dire consequences and from which there is a risk of no return. We cannot remain silent or stand idly by. Therefore, together with the Secretary-General, we demand that the Security Council act immediately, as is its responsibility, to contain this situation.

We view with hope, joy and pride the fact that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was finally approved in July of this year. I congratulate Costa Rican Ambassador Elayne Whyte on that process. As President of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, she led the process with courage and great skill. That effort, together with that of the participating delegations, made a dream come true after more than seven decades.

The Treaty is a strong message that most States Members of the United Nations do not support, do not accept and do not consider nuclear weapons as legitimate, and that the international community clearly states that nuclear weapons are not only immoral, ethically repugnant, but are, henceforth, illegal. A new norm of international law that absolutely prohibits nuclear weapons in all circumstances is therefore established and provides a solid and legally binding framework for the destruction and total elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner within specified time frames.

As an unarmed democracy that bases its defence entirely on international law, we are satisfied that, in addition to prohibiting the development, production, manufacture, transfer, possession, storage, location, installation and deployment of nuclear weapons, the Treaty explicitly prohibits the threat of its use, thereby also banning so-called nuclear deterrence security doctrines.

Many will say that this entire effort is meaningless, since none of the nuclear Powers wanted to be part of it. With respect, I tell them they are wrong. The desire of the 122 countries that approved the text of the Treaty is the legitimate voice of peoples who love peace and defend humankind. Any effort to support disarmament will never be pointless. Supporting peace will never be a mistake. Costa Rica applauds those 122 countries and all those that will sign the Treaty tomorrow, and urgently calls on others to join in signing it, so that we can ensure a future for us and for those who will come after us so that we can continue to build the world we are dreaming of.

Costa Rica is constantly shocked by the terrorist attacks that unfortunately happen everywhere in the world almost every week of the year. Once again, we want to express our absolute and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, no matter who commits it, wherever it is committed or whatever its purpose, and we stress the need to bring its perpetrators to justice. The fight against terrorism must be framed in strict observance of international law, including human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

I wish to emphasize the crucial role of international law as a legitimate mechanism for settling disputes among States, which we must resolve. In that regard, considering that unilateral economic sanctions are not efficient ways to punish Governments but can seriously harm the rights of peoples to well-being and development, I once again would like to express the opposition of my country to the embargo that the United States has imposed against Cuba for 55 years, with high human, economic and social costs for its population.

Sixty-nine years ago Costa Rica decided to exchange weapons and soldiers for notebooks and teachers. Sixty-nine years ago Costa Rica decided to establish, strengthen and promote international law as the civilized way to resolve its differences with others. Today, 69 years later, Costa Rica continues to believe that.

The original goal of the creation of the United Nations was to save future generations from the scourge of war. The world has changed in a dizzying way since 1945. The threats and challenges to peace, stability and global security are increasingly diverse and complex. However, there is something that has not changed one iota: the intrinsic and natural impulse to strive untiringly towards the most dignified and highest universal values based on law and towards the prevalence of institutions over brute force, of multilateralism over smaller, narrower and pettier national interests. That is the essence of this institution: to achieve the well-being of all nations as a whole by sustaining peace in each of them. It is not the opposite. It is not to achieve the well-

being of each nation in order to achieve global well-being, but rather it is in the world's interest to uphold the interests and well-being of our individual nations.

The Andalusian poet Federico García Lorca said that theatre is the poetry that rises from the page and becomes human, and becoming human, speaks and yells, cries and despairs. It is our duty now to take action based on our rhetoric and to go out into the world and make it all possible. We must restore hope to the hearts of the world's citizens and ensure that that hope leads to a life of dignity that enables them to fully enjoy their rights and freedoms. The fight to uphold human rights is historic and long-standing endeavour. Never before have the levels of education and peace been so high and the number of conflicts so low. That does not mean that we should reduce our mobilization efforts and become complacent. It means that, in spite of it all and although war and structural violence still plague many regions of the world, human society remains on the right path, in no small measure due to the Organization's efforts.

We own our future. In spite of the pain caused by injustice and perpetual and pervasive irrational behaviour, there are more people who believe that happiness, solidarity, freedom, justice, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation are possible — many more than those who promote death, pain, torture and militarization and spread fear, which all thwart our beautiful creative capacity.

This will be the last time that I address the Assembly as President of Costa Rica. Next year, as my country fulfils a decades-old civic duty yet again, my people will send a new representative to address an Organization of which we are so proud. That will happen repeatedly in future because a democracy's presidential mandate calls for the perpetual renewal of its leadership. I have been pondering this moment for several months. On behalf of all representatives and their children, I would like to dedicate these closing words to my sons and daughters.

Future generations also deserve to be acknowledged in this universal forum because, in many ways, they are the beneficiaries of the solutions their parents brought to the table, both metaphorically and in the deepest human sense. I would like Mónica, Cristina, Beatriz, Diego, Ignacio and little Inés to know that each time a father or mother steps up to this rostrum to promote peace and justice, reconciliation and solidarity, it is with them and their present and future in mind. I would like them to know that each time a father or mother takes the floor to promote human rights, gender equality and the importance of protecting the environment from the irrational forces of human greed or consumerism, they do it out of deep concern for their well-being and that of future generations. I would like them to also know that their father, and before him other Costa Rican mothers and fathers who stood before the Assembly, did so proud to represent a people who are full of dignity, hard working and courageous. They clamour for peace and seek to build it day by day. They will always uphold human rights as our universal family's highest good. That should make them proud and happy. They should be proud to be part of an ongoing story that, like the waves of the ocean will happen time and again, just as the world continues to have hopes and dreams for human progress. They should be happy because they know that our efforts to promote justice and peace have not been and will not be in vain.

I hope that the United Nations will continue to be the preferred forum for fostering understanding among the peoples of the world. It will not be a conflict-free environment because, unfortunately, that is not our species' default state, but it could be a meeting point where people can reach agreement, based on the higher aspirations of human progress that makes survival possible. I also hope that this session can shed light on demilitarization and denuclearization, which are the only ways to ensure our survival, beyond all efforts to guarantee it.

I also sincerely hope, with all my heart and soul, that all nations represented here today are happy, at peace and able to adhere to the wise biblical admonition to beat swords into ploughshares. It is simply another way of saying love your neighbour as you love yourself.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Museveni: I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and assure him of Uganda's support. We are confident that he will lead the Assembly effectively and successfully. I would also like to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his leadership of the Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also pay tribute to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his personal dedication and commitment to the work of the United Nations.

The theme for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is very pertinent. I am happy this topic is being discussed. I have always wondered why the elites in the different countries of the world do not see its importance. Who would lose if everyone in the world led a decent life and every adult consumed between 2,000 and 2,500 calories per day? Who would lose if everyone were consuming the right number of calories every day? Who would lose if everyone were immunized against immunizable diseases? Who would lose if all the immunizable diseases that afflict people were immunized against? Who would lose if we were to achieve universal immunization for all the people in the world? What would be the problem? Who would lose if all young people, children, accessed education to achieve literacy, numeracy and skills, as a minimum? Who would lose if all human beings had health units within a radius of 5 kilometres from where they live? Who would lose if all human beings had access to clean electricity, away from charcoal, firewood and dirty kerosene? Who would lose if every adult had a well-paying job? Who would lose if every family on the globe had a decent, three-bedroom house? Who would lose if every person had access to clean water? Who would lose if no person on the globe had to worry about war, terrorism or crime? Who would lose if every provider of a service or producer of a good that is needed for use in the world had a right of access to markets? Who would lose if all the countries in the world had good transport and other elements of infrastructure? Who would lose if we all insisted on protecting Mother Nature so that it can also look after us?

To what extent would this effort at global affluence stimulate business? How much cement, steel, copper and food would we need? How would all that impact business? If we aimed at global affluence, how much would this impact business positively? Why, then, do we all have bad businessmen who do not have spectacles effective enough to see the implied business opportunities if we aim at global affluence? As a milk and beef producer myself, only a few months ago I was cautioning my fellow farmers against excessive greed as far as the price per litre of milk and per kilogram of beef were concerned. The farmers were trying to demand extremely high prices for beef and milk, but I warned them that if the milk were too expensive, the people might not buy it as much as if it were better priced. The more buyers we have for our products, the more prosperous we will be. We would therefore be both good businesspeople as well as good Christians, because we would be doing business in a fair way. Therefore, in my opinion, parasitism is the only obstacle to global affluence, prosperity and peace.

On the dangerous situation on the Korean peninsula, where very dangerous instruments of mass extermination are paraded around by the two contending sides, I have one question. My approach today is just to pose questions. I will not answer all of them, but I put them to the Assembly so that members can answer them themselves. I have one question. Who would lose if North Korea and South Korea, those kith and kin, were left alone to discuss their reunification? The Korean nation came into existence in 1234 A.D., according to the information available on the Internet. Why cannot these people — they are one people — discuss their reunification instead of maintaining a divided peninsula, the division of which it is our job to manage endlessly? Koreans were temporarily divided towards the end of the Second World War. Why should this division be allowed to be permanent and a source of dangerous tensions? A unified Korea would be a very strong nation. Why do some actors fear strong nations in the world? Why should the Koreans themselves, North and South, allow external forces to continue to divide them? We always strive not to allow actors, foreign or local, to divide the African peoples, regardless of the complications involved. When one hears that Uganda accommodates many African refugees, it is on account

of a conscious ideological position to not allow any actors to divide us. We fight only traitors. Who has been hurt by a unified Viet Nam since 1975, although the method of their unification was not the best one? Who has been hurt by the reunification of Germany since 1990?

Finally, on the small issue of enforcing sanctions against North Korea, Uganda is in compliance. That is not a big problem, for we do not have to trade with North Korea. We are, however, grateful that, in the past, the North Koreans helped us to build our tank forces.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.